

## **The Politics of Urban Informality**

Moulay Driss El Maarouf<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The University of Bayreuth, Cultural Studies, Bayreuth, Germany

elmaaroufmoulaydriss@gmail.com

Music festivals, urban eranas for grassroots hip hop commentators, is a space for what Stewart Hall calls the global cultural postmodern, where the street as the locus for the periphery builds tunnels toward the center, managing constant conflict situations and processes of negotiation about representation and power, (re)producing political statements that reconstruct concepts of nation, identity, locality and memory. My paper highlights hip hop music festivals as sites and seats of struggle, which, however largely constructed by the state to manipulate and tame the youth, witness the birth of counter-discursive practices. Through their lyrics, raptivists spawn verandas of (counter) power and resistance, foregrounding bold statements against against the dominant political concepts, against elitist corruption, against glocal shapes of oppression and, most particularly, against the state. Within such urban dynamics, music slips into various political attires, becoming a strong weapon for change. In the course of appropriating local and marginal young actors by way of music festivals of this kind, the latters, being of a mind to resist and articulate their marginality in a perpetual quest for power, craft local performances which summon efforts to name rappers the future voice of the people. To drive this idea home, I will focus on the Boulevard des Jeune Musiciens, the largest contemporary music festival in North Africa and the first event dedicated to urban contemporary music, as a prototypical postcolonial site for resistance. The Boulevard rap musicians and fans, Afro-westernized in dress and manners as they are (not), contrive a mixture of languages and (over)tones, reacting to the post-independence Morocco with all its frustrations and (dis)illusionments. I believe that the Boulevard event represent a complex, multi-faced reality, a mixture of repressive and resistant qualities that have to be analysed in terms of the dialectical concern with conflict and contradiction, as it communicates the excluded consciousness of the youth. Hence, it would be very interesting to go beyond the artistic value of the rising trends of hip hop music in Morocco, into the political implications of such a phenomenon. Festivals can function, in Taieb Belghazi's thinking, as manifestations of 'community power, solidarity and resistance to social control.' Through this paper, we will learn how the natives possess the ability to become 'post-natives' and to construct illusionary realities which may empower them.